

DEATH

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Throughout the Caucasus, the dead were held in high regard, and the funeral and memorial customs were quite elaborate. More or less ubiquitous features were wailing-women who wept not only over the deceased, but also over his clothing and arms, scratching their faces and tearing out their hair; further, funeral receptions, and a number of memorial repasts (among the Khevsur up to twelve) held at different intervals after the death, among the mountaineers usually accompanied by various contests on horseback. Among the mountaineers, in spite of the general spread of Christianity or Islam, many features of the pagan past survived, among others the belief that the deceased had to make a long trip to the other world, that over there he needed food, his horse, the care of his wife, etc. The horse of the deceased played an important role in the funeral rites; among the Khevsur it was further cared for by a relative for the benefit of the deceased. Food and sometimes weapons were buried along with the dead; among the Circassians his wife would serve a portion for him at meals for a year; and the Ossetian widow for the same period would bring food to the grave of her husband every Friday, besides numerous other observances.

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has (or at least has had) the same significance among all North Caucasian mountain tribes, the explorers pass over the relation between birth and the fireplace without a single word. This may be a serious oversight. 851

§ 6. RESPECT OF CHILDREN FOR THEIR ELDERS

The NORTHWESTERNERS. The *adats* inform us that the children have a strict obligation of acknowledging the authority of their father. They must respect him and carry out all his commands. To disobey him or even to oppose his wishes would be, "according to customary law, the greatest abomination, and according to Islamic law, the greatest of sins."⁶⁸ This respect must continue even when old-age renders their parents helpless. When a joint-family is divided the sons must set aside a definite amount of property for the support of their parents and for their funeral.⁶⁹ The sons have the strict obligation of erecting a tombstone for their parents. The *adats* also demand that Rs. 300 should be set aside for an elaborate funeral feast. Formerly such feasts would often bring complete financial ruin to the family.⁷⁰ This great respect for parents is extended to elders in general, and especially to elder brothers.⁷¹ 593 888

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. The Lesghians show an unusually great respect for their parents.⁷² If the children fail to care for their aged parents, they may be summoned before the *kādī*, who will force them to do so.⁷³ Some excellent examples of this deep respect can be found in the official criminological reports of Kaitago-Tabassaran. "On August 3, 1869, a native of the village of Myura, Kaitago-Tabassaran, Mahomet Omar, after having been scolded by his mother for laziness shot himself."⁷⁴ Or again, "On October 2, 1869, a native of the *aul* of Kulidzha, Kaitago-Tabassaran, Ali-bek Salig, quarreled with his son, Murtuzali. After some time his son returned to his father and begged forgiveness. His father, however, refused to listen to his son's repentent words, coldly showing him the door and telling him never to return again. On hearing these words, Murtuzali took out his pistol and shot himself. His father, on seeing that he was the cause of his son's grief and death, took his own life by falling on his *kinjal*."⁷⁵ 593 762 888

The reports concerning the Avars being contradictory demand special attention. Some claim that the Avars have just as much respect for their elders as do the other Lesghians. If a son is unable to fulfill the wishes of his father,

⁶⁸ Leontovič, II, p. 250, § 134.

⁶⁹ Ladyzenskij, FT, p. 206.

⁷⁰ Ladyzenskij, FT, p. 208.

⁷¹ Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 169.

⁷² Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 441 is certainly exaggerating when he says that the Chechens "deny their mothers even the respect Nature has implanted in the hearts of all men." This very sentence has been copied and re-copied from the *adat* collections by a number of pre-Soviet authors without inquiring into the reliability of the report. Světin, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 f, regarding Lesghians.

⁷³ Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 203. For details regarding the kind of support demanded by the *lar's* in Dargwa, see Kovalevskij, *op. cit.*, pp. 203 f.

⁷⁴ "Iz gorskij kriminalistiki," SSKG, III (1870), p. 7.

⁷⁵ "Iz gorskij kriminalistiki," p. 8.